

Michael Langer

**LABOR  
ZIONIST  
IDEOLOGY  
RECONSIDERED**

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Ichud Habonim



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## Labor Zionist Ideology Reconsidered

Ichud Habonim - Israel

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Leopold Zvirol Ideology Reconsidered

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A thorough re-evaluation of Labor Zionist ideology seems to be over-due. What seems to be called for is not merely an updating - rather it would appear that it is necessary to dismember the entire ideology into its components, examine each individual component for its relevance, revising where necessary, and then re-assemble the modified parts into a new ideological construct.

To me, ideology denotes a purposive "Weltanschauung". I agree with Stanley Meron "that the function of ideological thinking is to enable us to grasp and interpret reality... To put it another way, ideological thinking has to be like a map that orients us and gives us the ability to act in the field. The reality within which we live changes with increasing speed. In order for our ideological understanding to be meaningful, it too has to change at a parallel pace".<sup>1</sup>

Both socialism and Zionism, as well as the very concept of ideology, are phenomena of and responses to the modern age. Hence, an understanding of the signal features and the nature of modernity is a necessary preliminary to a dissection of Socialist Zionist ideology.

#### The Modern Age vs. Traditional Society: An Evolutionary Crisis

As Rene Dubos has pointed out in his book, The God Within,<sup>2</sup> during the millions of years since humans first made their appearance, the norm of the social environment was a small group or band. The social basis was a relatively small group, generally an extended family, or perhaps a group of extended families which formed a community. Throughout this period, the social cohesion of human community was maintained by a framework of implicit mutual obligations between members of the large variety of traditional kinship societies that Homo Sapiens evolved.

One hundred and twenty-five thousand generations developed within a social milieu of a certain common communal quality. It would be reasonable to

<sup>1</sup> Stanley Meron, The Kibbutz: Community or Institution, Ichud HaKvutzot VeHakibbutzim, Ideological Study Circle, January 1975

<sup>2</sup> Rene Dubos, The God Within, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972, pp. 281-290

assume that such a period of time was adequate to allow for some selection of the species in this direction. In other words, in terms of biological endowment, the communal-extended family framework with inter-personal relationships based on mutual obligations is the normative one for Homo Sapiens. It is what we describe as "traditional society". This generalization can be made without gainsaying the tremendous variety of traditional societies that did develop.

The coming of the Modern Age probably constitutes the greatest discontinuity not only in the 6000 year recorded history of humankind, but also in the three million year evolutionary history of the Genus Homo. The challenges that modernity posed (and poses) for the Jewish People are only the particular manifestations of the major problem that the Modern Age constitutes for all humankind today.

The dynamics of the passing of the traditional order can be briefly sketched. The Renaissance and the Enlightenment of the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries sundered medieval philosophy into natural sciences, political philosophy (political science), theology and metaphysics. The religio-philosophical base of human existence which related man through community to the cosmic was undermined by Copernicus and Galileo. An age of discovery, both scientific and geographic, was initiated. The economic and technological changes stemming therefrom led straight to the Industrial Revolution.

The political philosopher, John Locke, posited a political state whose purpose was to ensure "the rights of the individual" as against defining the obligations of the individual to his community. The cumulative result of these processes was the disintegration of the organic community characterizing traditional society and its world outlook. The Age of Discovery provided the opportunity of founding new communities unfettered by traditional ties. New wealth flowed into the hands of new classes who had no place in the traditional order. The political state predicated on the unfettered rights of the individual naturally became wedded to the principle of private ownership and management of the means of production and distribution of goods (i.e. capitalism).

Most important of all, the rural ecology on which traditional society had been based broke down

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as the industrial revolution progressed. The dislocation of the rural population to an urban setting was characterized by the transformation of the extended family village unit to the fragmented urban nuclear family. Within the city itself, new modes of production and resulting division of labor broke up the network of guilds and fraternities - the medieval urban equivalent of the village socio-economic framework. The destruction of community gave birth to that social phenomenon which most characterizes the Modern Age - Mass Society and the alienation of the individual.<sup>3</sup>

In summary, the Modern Age made traditional outlooks meaningless, and social frameworks and established norms lost their relevance. A new human condition emerged - that of alienations and apartness. New social and economic realities emerged for which there were no precedents, and for which existing outlooks could no longer provide meaning or guidelines for effective action. Perhaps the most unsettling aspect of these ephocal changes was (and is) that they constituted not a one time discontinuity to which humans could adjust, but rather a continuing and continually accelerating discontinuity as a "constant" factor in one's life. For one's outlook to be purposive in the context of contemporary affairs requires constant revision of ideology.

Both Zionism and Socialism are responses to the Modern Age. Socialism was a response in Western Society to the emergence of capitalism and the accompanying phenomenon of the exploitation of a disadvantaged mass - the proletariat. Zionism is a complex of Jewish responses to modernity - to understand it, we will have to view it in the perspective of Jewish responses to the Modern Age in general. Socialist Zionism is a combination, and as such embodies problematics both of Zionist ideology and Socialist ideology. Therefore, reconsidering Socialist Zionist ideology involves retracing the evolution of each of the individual components of the Socialist Zionist synthesis.

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<sup>3</sup>In part, this perspective on the dynamics of the breakdown of traditional society has been taken from Stanley Meron, "The Individual and Society" in Halacha, Community and Kibbutz, UAHC College Education Dept., New York, 1976

## THE PATHS OF SOCIALISM

The Encyclopedia Britannica defines Socialism as "a system of public ownership and management of the means of production and distribution of goods" (as distinct from the private ownership of these means under Capitalism). This economic definition unfortunately ignores the etiology of Socialism as a social response to the phenomenon of human alienation in mass society. Differing strategies and tactics for achieving both the economic and social aims of socialism were evolved. A synopsis of these is necessary for us to understand the relationship which some of these schools of social thought developed to Zionism. Out of such an understanding we may venture an opinion as to what schools of socialist thought (if any) are of significance to Zionism today as a Jewish response to the Modern Age.

Historically, the first major question within socialism was one of motive. Should socialism appeal "to reason, to justice, to the will of man to remedy the maladjustments of society..." or was it a matter of "acquiring an active awareness of what is 'dialectically' brewing in the womb of industrialism...?"<sup>4</sup> In other words, are moral principles absolute in determining strategy and tactics or is it a question of developing an "objective and scientific" socialism based on a socio-economic analysis of society and historical trends within it which suggest guidelines of action? In a sense, Utopian Socialism of the first half of the Nineteenth Century was "pre-ideological". Scientific ("fully ideological") Socialism was a result of developments in the field of philosophy - particularly the work of Kant and Hegel.

The Communist Manifesto of 1848 clearly opted for scientific socialism while castigating the Utopian Socialists as impractical dreamers and, in effect, accomplices of the oppressor capitalist bourgeoisie.

### Marxism vs. Anarchism

The next and major question of socialist strategy arose within "scientific socialism" itself

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<sup>4</sup> Martin Buber, Paths in Utopia, (1949), Beacon Press, Boston, 1958, p.9

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and concerned the concept of public ownership and management of the means of production and distribution. At what level of human social and political organization would public ownership and management be expressed, and what would be the social implications? "Mainline Socialism" (i.e. Marxist Socialism) perceived the State as being the ultimate repository of public authority and responsibility. But Proudhon's view, which was to lead to anarchist socialism, opted for "mutualism" - the self-definition of publics on the basis of mutual interests and their voluntary federation, nationally and internationally. The Marxist belief in centralization and unitary collectivism was incompatible with the anarchist approach of mutualism and federalism - a pluralist view of legitimate authority.

In the 1870's within scientific socialism these issues came to ahead - both with regard to strategy and with regard to tactics.

Was the alienation and the emergence of mass society a function purely of economic exploitation, or was it a result of other social causes - in particular the breakdown of traditional society and the centralization of political and economic power in the state? From today's perspective, one might say that the question arose whether economics or sociology should constitute the basic perspective of socialist ideology.

In the view of what was to become Anarchist Socialism, the state itself as an institution (serving during the latter half of the nineteenth century as an instrument of rapacious capitalism) was the primary evil. Anarchist thinkers, the most prominent among them during the last quarter of the 19th century being Petr Kropotkin, called for the re-establishment of voluntary groupings based on occupational or geographic affinities. Political authority and economic and social responsibility would be a community function of these primary groupings. Such primary units would voluntarily enter into mutual association and federative arrangements with similarly minded groups. Merely replacing the capitalist state with a socialist state seemed to be trading alienation of one kind for another. Anarchists differed on how their aims should be achieved. Some refused to work through legislation as such, but rather founded voluntary groups and cooperative societies. Others resorted

to mass persuasion, civil disobedience and non-violent resistance (Tolstoi, Ghandi). There were those who believed in militant group action, violence and civil war to achieve their aims (Spain). Anarchosyndicalists perceived labor unions to be the logical basis for anarchist socialist collectives. Finally, a small minority of anarchists called for terrorist acts by individuals against prominent personages representing the hated state. The scientific perspective of anarchist socialism was sociology (Durkheim, Tonnies), and even anthropology and biology (Kropotkin). Kropotkin in particular inveighed against the social Darwinism which tried to justify Capitalism and to some extent, the necessity of a strong centralized state by adducing the idea of 'survival of the fittest' into human affairs. In his book "Mutual Aid - A Factor of Evolution" he discredits Social Darwinism on the basis of his studies in animal and human behaviour. We would categorize his work today as ethology and cultural anthropology.

However, the ascendant school of scientific socialists believed in the state as the frame of reference socially and politically for achieving the aims of socialism. They were the Marxist majority of the First International, and later the Second International. But they differed amongst themselves on tactics. Should the disadvantaged - i.e. the exploited workers - seek to 'conquer' the bourgeois state peacefully from within, by constitutional, electoral means, in order to use the state machinery as an instrument of power to achieve socialists ends? Or - was the contemporary state as such in and of itself irrevocably a class institution which must be destroyed and replaced by a proletarian state. The first path led from Lasalle to Democratic Socialism and non-revolutionary Marxism. The second path led to Revolutionary Marxism which also held that the ultimate aim of the classless society would be achieved only after revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat had been instituted as an intermediate phase. A universal workers society would emerge when such proletarian revolutions will have taken place in the industrial nations. This scientific socialism utilized philosophy (Hegel), economics, and history (Marx and Engels) in shaping its ideological outlook.

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The incompatability between Revolutionary Marxism, "Evolutionary" Marxism, and Anarchism, manifested itself in the First International and came to a head with Marx's bitter criticism of both Lasalle and Proudhon and his critique of the Gotha Program (1872). As Robert Nisbet has pointed out, the opposition between Marxism and anarchism was manifested clearly in their opposing approach to industrialism.

"Marxists tended to accept all the structural characteristics of capitalist production, including the factory system, technology and the dominance of city over rural areas (whereas) anarchists foresaw the ending of the factory system, the complete decentralization of technology, and a general restoration of rural patterns of life..."<sup>5</sup>

The tensions between revolutionary Marxism and non-revolutionary socialisms shaped the history of socialism in various lands. For our purposes, it is principally Russian socialism that concerns us here - constituting as it did the intellectual matrix within which the socialism of Socialist Zionism emerged.

### Socialism in Russia

To begin with, late Nineteenth Century Russia was still largely pre-industrial with a traditional, partly feudal, society still intact. Hence, there arose a socialist ideology peculiar to Russian conditions - Populist Socialism. The nurture of the commune basis of Russian village life, together with the overthrow of Tzarism and the landed aristocracy was perceived by the Narodnik People's Movement (Populist Socialism) to be the relevant socialist path for Russia. There was some affinity between such thinking (Lavrov, Tolstoi) and anarchism (Kropotkin). Ultimately, the Socialist Revolutionary Party which evolved, allied itself with Kerensky and disappeared in the maelstrom of the Bolshevik Revolution. But this particular non-

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<sup>5</sup> Robert Nisbet, The Social Philosophers, New York, Thomas Crowell, 1973. p.357

Marxist Socialism certainly did influence the Chalutzim of the Second Aliya, although the degree of this influence has, in my opinion, been exaggerated. (Walter Laqueur, for example, has considered the influence of Populist Socialism to be almost decisive in shaping the ideas of the Zionist Labor Movement.<sup>6</sup>).

Marxist Russian Social Democratic Party, dating from 1883, split on the question of revolutionary tactics - the Mensheviks under the leadership of Martov (Julius Ossipovich Zederbaum) affirmed non-revolutionary tactics. The ascendant Bolsheviks under Lenin strove for the Revolution on the basis of an emerging industrial proletariat rousing the peasant masses. The Jewish Bund which saw itself as part of the Russian Social Democratic Movement, finally opted for the Mensheviks - in part because of Bolshevik hostility to Jewish-socialist separateness. At a later stage after WWI, another tactical question emerged for the revolutionary Marxists. Should high priority be given to "World Revolution" (Trotsky) or should Revolutionary Marxism establish itself firmly in one or a number of states and then compete with capitalism by various means (Stalin).

Socialist Zionism first formulated its ideologies in the context of Russian Socialism - Populist and Marxist. It was secondarily aware of and influenced by Utopian and Anarchist socialism as well as the evolutionary socialism of Edward Bernstein.

This was the ideological supermarket of socialism. In theory, it still represents the basic options in socialism today. We must now turn to the impact of modernity on Judaism to study the emergence of Zionism, and how it meshed with socialist ideology.

#### THE JEWISH RESPONSE TO THE MODERN AGE: PRIMARY AND SECONDARY RESPONSES

For a correct analysis of the Jewish response to the Modern Age, it is most useful to distinguish between the primary impact of modernity on the Jewish community itself as against the secondary effects on the Jewish community of the breakdown of

<sup>6</sup> Walter Laqueur, A History of Zionism, New York  
10 Schocken Books, 1976, pp.278-271

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the traditional order among the peoples in whose  
midst Jews lived. Two such secondary effects were  
the Emancipation of the Jews, and the rise of modern  
Anti-Semitism.

#### Emancipation, The Breakdown of Community and Reform

As Arthur Herzberg has pointed out, the Edict  
of Emancipation was not primarily altruistic.<sup>7</sup> Rather,  
it was a grudging conclusion reached by Rationalists  
who identified organic (traditional) Jewish Commu-  
nity with the Feudal Order. In order to eradicate  
every vestige of medieval community and communal  
authority, the Jews too, would have to forego their  
communal autonomy and become individual citizens in  
the nation-state. The political philosophy of the  
French Revolution would not permit the existence of  
communal frameworks as intermediaries between the  
citizen and the State.

It was one of the historical functions of the  
Wissenschaft des Judentum (the "Science of Judaism")  
and Classical Reform Judaism to provide a Jewish  
imprimatur for the demands of Emancipation by all  
but eliminating the particularistic aspects of  
Judaism, such as the autonomous existence of Jewish  
collectivity and the ritual expression of Messianic  
hopes of national restoration.

Abraham Geiger, the leading thinker of 19th  
Century Reform, considered that Judaism had evolved  
beyond the need for particularism to the level of a  
spiritual brotherhood with a universal mission -  
to give witness among the nations to the universal  
moral and ethical truths of Judaism. A new consensus  
regarding Jewish observance - compatible with the  
insights of the Enlightenment was to be developed.  
Other Reformers such as Holdheim were even more  
revolutionary in their demands.<sup>8</sup>

There were two major flaws in the classical  
Reform Response. Firstly, it failed to see (from  
a theoretical point of view) that because of the

<sup>7</sup> Arthur Hertzberg, The French Enlightenment and the Jews, Jewish Publication Society, 1968

<sup>8</sup> For a short survey of ideological developments in  
Reform Judaism, see "Reform Judaism" in Encyclo-  
pedia Judaica (Keter-1971) Vol.14, pp.23-27

breakdown of community, the social basis for achieving a consensus on new and binding Jewish norms, was absent. Secondly, the Reform stance was, of course, based on an overly optimistic prognosis regarding the possibility of Jewish integration in modern Western society as a result of the Enlightenment and Emancipation.

The stance of Classical Reform was in keeping with much of the optimistic outlook of most of the Nineteenth Century which interpreted contemporary events as heralding mankind's evolution from particularistic to universalistic frameworks. Abraham Geiger in his de-emphasis of the particularistic within Judaism was a moderate when compared to his contemporary, Karl Marx, another German born into the Mosaic persuasion the "father of scientific socialism". Marx negated all religion, and especially Judaism, in the name of the universalistic outlook, which posited economic class as the true and ultimate determinant of community of interest in human history.

Both Marxist Socialism and Classical Reform, in spite of their major differences can be seen today as quintessentially products of the Nineteenth Century - products of political and social forces whose immediate political progenitor was the French Revolution. But, in a wider sense, these forces represented initial Nineteenth Century responses to the passing of traditional society, and the problematic onset of a new epoch.

#### Anti-Semitism

A more ominous effect of the Modern Age on the Jewish People stemmed from the compensatory reactions within some nations to the loss of organic community. The dislocation and frustrations engendered by this break-down of traditional society resulted in some cases in a process of attempting to define the political nation-state as "organic community", a kind of substitute for the traditional kinship society. Those of common stock - racial and/or cultural - were part of the "family" and its destiny. The universal "out-group" was, of course, the Jews. They could also serve as a convenient scapegoat, a "lightning rod" for deflecting social tension. The end result made Jewish existence increasingly non-viable, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe.

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The particular economic urban niches that the Jewish communities occupied in Central and Eastern Europe coupled with traditional religious hostility to the Christ Killers exacerbated the friction between them and the new alienated urban proletariat. Thus, we have the birth of the problem of the Jews. Hence, the "Problem of the Jews" was a secondary effect of the impact of the Modern Age on certain host-societies within which Jews lived.<sup>9</sup>

It is a sobering, but unfortunately, true fact that Anti-Semitism was also a feature of much socialist thinking. The Jew was the symbol of exploitative capitalistic commercialism. Among others, the Utopian Fourier, the Anarchist Proudhon, the scientific socialists Marx, Engels, and the founder of Russian Marxism, Plekhanov, were vociferous derogators of the Jew and Judaism.<sup>10</sup>

#### Political Zionism as a Secondary Response

Modern Political (Herzlian) Zionism emerged towards the very end of the Nineteenth Century, almost two generations after Reform Judaism and a generation after the East European Haskala. It was a direct response to the perceived limits of the emancipatory process and the rise of Anti-Semitism. Political Zionism saw that in most cases, the modern political state constituted a new type of particularistic polity inimical in varying degrees to Jews as such. Only within a sovereign state of their own could the Jews find a place where they would be fully free and equal "like all the nations". Such was the political solution posited for the Problem of the Jews by political Zionism. Hence, in origin, Political Zionism was a defensive response of emancipated Jews frustrated by anti-Semitism and inspired to emulate the very socio-political trends undermining the basis of corporate Jewish existence in Europe.

The first World War (the Balfour Declaration) legitimized Political Zionism by recognizing the

<sup>9</sup> An incisive analysis of the peculiar vulnerability of the Jews to the disaffection of those dislocated by the transition from the medieval order to the political nation-state will be found in Hannah Arendt's, The Origins of Totalitarianism. New York 1951.

<sup>10</sup> Socialist Anti-Semitism; Max Geltman, MIDSTREAM, March 1977, p.20

Jews as a people to whom the principle of National self-determination should be applied. World War One and the resulting collapse of the Second International also exposed the fallacy of the Marxist assumption that class interest would take precedence over identification with nation-community. It made Jewish Bundism irrelevant. The pathological culmination of the concept of organic "nation-community-race" in the land of Reform Judaism's birth was to call for serious re-evaluation of Judaism's universal mission and made the negation of Jewish national particularism (peoplehood and a National Home) untenable.

#### THE EMERGENCE OF JEWISH IDEOLOGY

It is of cardinal importance to differentiate between Jewish responses to the Modern Age, secondary to the breakdown of the traditional societies amongst whom the Jews lived, and the primary responses of Jews and Judaism to the impact of the Modern Age on traditional Jewish Society itself. The breakdown of Jewish community based on Rabbinic Judaism not only exposed Jews and Jewish thought to the Enlightenment, but also created the potential and the need for an ideology of Judaism to confront the challenge of the Modern Age.

We are not accustomed to think in terms of Jewish ideology. Our background has conditioned us to associate ideology with the options in political philosophy, economics and sociology as they have evolved primarily in Western society during the past 400 years. To consciously create ideological constructs out of the raw material of Jewish tradition can be considered both heretical (by the Orthodox), or an atavistic anachronism (by the "enlightened"). I say "consciously create" because we are not speaking of ideologies (e.g. various socialisms) which ex post facto can be interpreted as being inspired by "the prophetic ideals of social justice" or "the messianic spirit". We are speaking of the deliberate positing of a purposive (action oriented) Jewish Weltanschauung in the face of the demise of traditional Judaism. Such a Jewish ideology must develop an integrated view of three inseparable elements immanent in Judaism - a concept of particular community (Peoplehood), a system of communal and individual behavioural norms (Halacha), and 14 religious beliefs (theology).

## Jewish Ideologies: Reform Judaism and the Cultural Zionisms

For the purpose of this paper, three distinct Jewish ideologies had developed by the First World War - Classical Reform Judaism, secular Cultural Zionism, and Religious Zionism. We have already seen that Classical Reform affirmed both Jewish theology and Halacha, but demanded ongoing reform in both these components. However, insofar as nearly all was left to the individual's conscience, the mere affirmation of Jewish theology and Halacha was not conducive to creating a definable approach to a viable Judaism. At the most, there could be contributions to Jewish ethics and philosophy. By the negation of particular Jewish community, Classical Reform, in a sense, excluded itself by definition from participating in a comprehensive Jewish ideology.

Secular Cultural Zionism and Religious Zionism (as distinct from Political Zionism) were both directly concerned with the continued creative survival of the Jewish People and Jewish culture. They both affirmed the necessity of re-establishing a Jewish National Center in the historic homeland of the Jewish People, where Jews could act at all levels of human social and political organization normative to the present age. They believed that only thus could Judaism develop the relevant responses to modernity. They did not believe that the Jews could or should be a 'normal' nation. Hence, their Zionist motives differed radically from those of the political Zionists. For cultural Zionists, a National Home would also ensure (culturally or religiously) Jewish survival in the Diaspora. (Again - this contrasted with the somber prognosis of the Political Zionists regarding the possibility of any creative Jewish existence in the Diaspora.)

Clearly, both Cultural and Religious Zionism affirmed Jewish Peoplehood (as distinct from Reform), but demanded a change in the sociology and the ecology of the Jewish people. But Secular Cultural Zionism was either indifferent or even hostile regarding questions relating to Jewish theology and Halacha. At the most, they were prepared to relate to Jewish National traditions (e.g. Chanukah, Pesach). By and large, Secular Cultural Zionists (as well as Political Zionists) looked to the West to provide political ideology for the Jewish State to be.

Only the Religious Zionists promoted what was in effect, a total Jewish ideology for their Zionist vision. Clearly the Religious Zionists were in agreement with the Cultural Zionists on the principle of Jewish peoplehood and the conclusions to be drawn therefrom. But in order to act, they had to make a radical departure from the traditional theology of normative Rabbinic Judaism, with regard to Messianic redemption.

Religious Zionists concluded that they would not passively await the coming of Messianic redemtion - they would anticipate it actively by performing the mitzva of settling and working in Eretz Israel, even if it meant co-operating with non-believing Jews (who were perceived as unknowing instruments of the divine will). In the eyes of the non-Zionist (and in part, anti-Zionist) Orthodox Jews, co-operation with those who did not believe in the divine laws was treason to the law, while anticipating the Messiah was "dechikat Haketz", a blasphemous attempt to push God into the act of Redemption.

On the other hand, there was no question among Religious Zionists of "Mizrachi" with regard to the norms which were to govern the nascent Zionist community. "The Land of Israel for the People of Israel according to the Torah of Israel". The Halacha of traditional Rabbinic Judaism and its further emendation by traditional Halachic methodology was to be the Law of the Land.<sup>11</sup>

#### IDEOLOGY OF LABOR ZIONISM

The foregoing is an essential preface to a reconsideration of Socialist-Zionism or Labor Zionism, and what it really was from an ideological point of view.

The key to understanding Labor Zionist ideology is that there were really two Labor Zionisms. One was fundamentally Political Zionism with Socialist "coloration". The other was a particular Cultural Zionism with significant secondary socialist influence. Labor Zionists of the "founding generation" tended to have elements of both types of Labor Zionism in their thinking. Labor Zionist ideology

<sup>11</sup> See for a fuller discussion: Yosef Tirosh, ed., Religious Zionism: An Anthology, World Zionist Organization, Jerusalem, 1975, pp.11-34

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was not so much a synthesis as an amalgam of disparate motivations leading to a similar line of action.

### Political Labor Zionism

In this scheme, Nachman Syrkin (1868-1924) and Ber Borochov (1881-1917) can be represented as Political Labor Zionists. Both Syrkin and Borochov believed that the class structure of the Jews must be normalized for Jews to become a 'normal' nation, and that this could be done only in Palestine. Syrkin was specifically disenchanted with liberalism and the "bourgeoisie betrayal of the Emancipation" with its accompanying anti-Semitism. He developed a theory of Jewish history whose aim it was to show that Jewish tradition was particularly suited to socialism. Borochov used a Marxist analysis to show that if the Jews would not have their own national conditions of production (their own national state), no Jewish working class would arise to control the means of production, and hence, Zionism was a prerequisite for Jewish participation in Marxism. In different ways, Syrkin and Borochov both used Western socialist ideology as their framework for rationalizing their Zionist ideology. It is this fact that characterized them as primarily Political Zionists even though, particularly in the case of Syrkin, elements of Cultural Zionism were present.

### Cultural Labor Zionism

The Labor Zionism of A.D. Gordon (1856-1922) stemmed from a radically different perspective. An organic national entity is dependent on the "binding of the natural landscape of the Homeland with the spirit of the people inhabiting it". Only there would a truly human society imbued with ideals of Brotherhood arise. A living national language and a spiritual renaissance are necessary, but in themselves cannot create this blending or cosmic unity. This requires that the people actually perform all the manual labor involved in building the National Home. In particular, they must work the soil from which they have been alienated in their Exile. The Jewish pioneers must become "Zealots of Labor" in order to create an ideal society. Here we have a particular variant of Cultural Zionism. Gordon was not primarily concerned with the problem of the Jews - he was intent on fulfilling the pre-conditions<sup>17</sup>

for a creative Jewish society. He was responding both to the breakdown of Jewish community as well as its alienation from a rural ecology. The influence of Populist Socialism and Anarchist Communism are evident but secondary to Gordon's Cultural Zionism. In his personal path of 'self-realization' Gordon symbolized the 'Religion of Labor' which was the keystone of his Cultural Zionism. Eli Schweid summarized its significance thus:

"In effect the way of life that he (Gordon) had known in the shtetl of the Diaspora with its fabric of Torah and tenets, was here replaced by a life of labor: tilling the soil, nurturing social relations based upon work. When he spoke of Labor he meant everyday toil - of the farmer in the field or the artisan in the workshop, but he endowed the word avodah with its original religious meaning: work in the field and the workshop became God's work."<sup>12</sup>

The early Chalutzim divided into parties on the basis of this difference of approach. The political Socialist Zionists were the Poale Zion (Ben Gurion, Ben Zvi). The Cultural Labor Zionists were Hapoel Hatzayir, and A.D. Gordon was their spiritual mentor. At the same time, there were those who almost from the beginning strove for some kind of synthesis - not identifying factionally (Berl Katzenelson [1887-1944]).

Hence, creating a Jewish working class and working on the land were justified by markedly disparate ideological reasoning on the part of the various factions within Labor Zionism. The rationale could be based either on a Jewish version of Marxist Socialism "a la Borochov", or on the utopian-anarchist Gordonian idea. Historical circumstances and the exigencies of the Zionist situation in Eretz Israel did lead to agreement in practice, if not in theory, on what was to be done. Maurice Samuel has described vividly the mixture of Socialist and Jewish commitment among Labor Zionist chalutzim.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Eliezer Schweid, "Spiritual Leadership and the Force of Personal Example, "Ariel, 42, 1976, page 98.

<sup>13</sup> Maurice Samuel "The Chalutzim" Level Sunlight, 18 New York, Knopf 5, 1953, Chapter 3

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### Reforming Jewish Community

By and large the purpose of the social forms and institutions that the Labor Zionists created were meant to reconstitute Jewish community by radical reforms in its ecology. At least in part there was to be a revival of a communal village framework. Personal relationships were to be defined by the mutual obligations of members of the community to each other and to the community as a whole. The idea of extended-family was to be interpreted anew by the egalitarian Kibbutz-commune chavura. Physical labor and "return to the soil" were the cardinal tenets of the chalutzim in their determination to revive a rural ecology for the Jewish people in its National Home.

The artisan skills and service professions were to be organized in their own trade unions. However, these were to be somewhat similar to the medieval guild-communities in their all encompassing concern with the social, cultural and even religious (now transposed to political) aspects of their members' lives.

An umbrella organization (Histadrut) of these frameworks for mutual responsibility - both agricultural collectives on the land and guild-unions in the cities - would provide initiative for economic development. Thus the dichotomy between the innovating capitalist class and the exploited laboring class was to be resolved at least in part by creating a significant sector of the economy in the Jewish National Home where both functions were modulated by the same over-arching Workers-community ("Chevrat Haovdim").

It is to be emphasized that such a concept assumed a national network of community based on the acceptance of mutual obligation not only between members of a given community for each other but also of all communities for each other. The ideological basis for such organization was open to differing interpretations. Marxists could view the Histadrut as a preparatory stage for creating the institutions of a Socialist state. Those who tended to 'non-ideological' socialism (meaning de facto a Utopian or Anarchist view) saw in the institutions thus created ends in themselves.

The vision of a new Hebrew society, freed from the constraints of Rabbinic halacha more or less in

alliance with the undemocratic authority-structure of Shtetl society (parnasim), provided the motivational amalgam for the Labor Zionist conception. Certainly the level of social idealism expressed in the Shtetl community was seen as falling short of and often perverting the prophetic ideals of social justice.

Hence, Labor Zionism in part was a particular interpretation of cultural Zionism - of the new Hebrew society and not merely a socialist vision of the Jewish political state. It saw itself as a do-it-yourself Cultural Zionism which emphasized the concept of community (a Hebrew laboring-class community) in the Jewish National Home as being a prerequisite for a renaissance of the Jewish people.

#### Labor Zionism: An Incomplete Jewish Ideology

From this perspective, the influence of Western ideology on Labor Zionism was surely present but in cultural Labor Zionism was secondary to the new Jewish ideology regarding Jewish community and Peoplehood. This primacy of 'Jewish ideology' was so even if in common with the more general secular cultural Zionism of Achad Ha'Am, it was accompanied by ambivalence or even hostility to questions of Jewish theology and Halacha. Hence, in comparison to Religious Zionism, Cultural Labor Zionism was an incomplete Jewish ideology.

Gordon and Katzenelson in particular, expressed their awareness of the ideological problems inherent in ignoring Jewish traditional content.<sup>14</sup> As early as 1920, Berl Katzenelson, the revered ideologue of Labor Zionism, between the World Wars remarked:

"We are now in a period wherein we are engaged only in constructing the frame of the building. Our thoughts have not yet turned to furnishing the house, to its interior decoration. We are expending

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<sup>14</sup> See for example: Berl Katzenelson, "Revolution and Tradition" (1934) and A.D. Gordon "Yom Kippur" in Arthur Hertzberg, ed., The Zionist Idea, Meridian Books, N.Y. 1960.

the greatest efforts to make the frame strong and spacious so that it will be able to accomodate all those who want to come in. We ourselves do not yet know how to enjoy living in the building. We have not known such an edifice since the days of the Babylonian captivity. We do not yet have the leisure for profound spiritual life... but the day will come. Some day there will be many Jews in the country and they will give us no rest. What is made light of today - due to hard labor or to dulled spirits - will become a cause of great spiritual distress for those who come after us. And as we now struggle with questions of Hebrew labor... in time to come they will struggle with questions of our cultural fate."<sup>15</sup>

In effect, Katzenelson gave a promissory note on the question of Jewish ideology assuming that in due course with the establishment of a Jewish state the pledge would be redeemed. It is the crux of Labor Zionism's ideological problem today that it has not done so. The potential of creating a new Jewish ideology through Labor Zionism has been a casualty of the ascendancy of political Zionism and the hegemony of Labor Zionism within it.

#### POLITICAL AND CULTURAL ZIONISM: 50 YEARS

It was the unhappy fate of Cultural Zionism in general that the pressure of historical events demanded an emphasis on the immediate and practical. Zionism during its first 60 years had to concern itself with the establishment of a secure political framework which could solve the problem of the Jews. Diaspora Zionism concerned itself with fund-raising and political work. Until 1948, Israeli Zionism concerned itself mainly with the actual struggle involved in the creation of the State of Israel. In the period immediately after the establishment of the

<sup>15</sup> quoted in: Ephraim Katzir, The Humanist Values and Objectives of the Israel Labor Movement, Attitudes Series, World Labor Zionist Movement, Tel Aviv, 1974. page 16

State, the central concern became the defense of the State and the absorption of hundreds of thousands of new, disadvantaged immigrants. This had (and has) a number of negative results in terms of cultural Zionism.

Firstly, almost from the time of the initial confrontation between cultural and political Zionism at the beginning of the century, and until well after the establishment of Israel, questions of survival simply shunted aside any serious discussion on cultural Zionism - i.e., the significance of the State as a means for ensuring a viable Jewish response to the Modern Age. Katzenelson "tabled" the problem within Labor Zionism. Figures such as Martin Buber and Judah Magnes who emerged between the World Wars with particular outlooks on the Jewish nature of the Jewish state found, in essence, that there was no public to give them a hearing.

Secondly, and parallel to the above, we have had the co-option of cultural Labor Zionism by Political Labor Zionism. Clearly, this process was catalyzed by Labor Zionism's assumption of power in the Yishuv, starting in the Nineteen thirties - the beginning of the most critical two decades in Zionism's political struggle and modern Jewish history.

#### The Kibbutzim and Political Zionism

The process of co-option is well illustrated by the evolution of the Kibbutz movement and its relationship to the Zionist (ultimately political Labor Zionist) establishment. From the beginning, the particular ideology of Cultural and Socialist Zionism embodied in the kibbutz movement was not shared by the political world Zionist "establishment" as a whole. But within the practical realities of upbuilding the National Home, the kibbutz movement was a useful - perhaps indispensable - partner. Kibbutzim represented the most economic way to settle the land for the chronically under-financed Zionist movement. The relatively high intellectual level of kibbutz members and the principle of collectively farming large areas made the kibbutzim the logical vehicle for rapid introduction of a modern agriculture for the growing Jewish urban population. In the nineteen twenties and thirties, the kibbutzim constituted an important framework for the absorption and training of immigrants. From the late 1930's and

until the early 50's, the kibbutzim were the most feasible and flexible way of establishing Jewish settlements in the face of growing Arab and British hostility. It would be difficult to imagine what the armistice lines of 1949 would have been were it not for the role of the kibbutzim, direct and indirect, in the struggle for statehood. In the post-1967 period, kibbutzim have again been used to serve political purposes of this nature.

Clearly, all of this had and has, little to do with the kibbutz's relationship to Cultural Zionism. The political Labor Zionism of Ben Gurion expressed in the policy of "Mamlachtiut" (statism), viewed the kibbutzim as serving the needs of the state. The immediate impact of the establishment of the State on the kibbutzim resulted in ideological disarray. For many, to continue living on the kibbutz seemed to be an anti-climax - and they left. Only now, a generation after the founding of the State, is the Kibbutz movement beginning to grapple again with the ideological meaning of what it has created and its relationship to the Jewish State and the Jewish People.

#### Labor Zionist "Statism" (Mamlachtiut)

The policy of Mamlachtiut was to have other deleterious effects on Labor Zionist elan - perhaps the most serious was the dissolution of "Labor Trend Schools" without creating an adequate substitute. Before the establishment of the State, each political grouping maintained a school system. Only Religious Zionism and the Kibbutz Movement maintained control of their educational systems and content. We will see later what profound effects are emerging in the mid'Seventies as a result of this.

The political result of the abdication of cultural Labor Zionism from contending with the gamut of Jewish ideology created a vacuum which in fact granted a monopoly to Orthodox Jewish Zionism with regard to theology and Halacha. The politics was simple - only Mizrachi had a Jewish ideology to which it gave first priority. Its political support was available to secular Zionist groupings (in particular the Labor Zionists) in return for concessions regarding its political prerogatives and the integration of rabbinic interpretations of Halacha as part of the law of the Yishuv and later on, the Jewish state.

Finally, the ascendancy of Political Zionism had negative implications for Israel-Diaspora relations. We will recall that negation of the Diaspora was inherent in political as distinct from cultural Zionist thinking from the very beginning. The apogee of this tendency was reached by Ben Gurion in the early Sixties with the almost total identification of Zionism with Aliya to the political State of Israel. This ascendancy was (and is) also reflected within the only real potential forum within which World Jewry in the free countries can grapple with questions concerning the continued creative survival of the Jewish People - the World Zionist Organization.

#### Political Zionism & the World Zionist Organization

The political primacy of Israel has been institutionalized in the World Zionist Organization in a number of ways. First, a disproportionate 38% of the WZO Congress votes are given to Israel. Next, the Israeli citizen in voting for an Israeli political party ipso facto votes for the same political party list to the World Zionist Organization. The Israeli's vote for Knesset elections is counted thus even if he does not consider himself a Zionist. It is enough to be a citizen of Israel. This really undercuts the possibility of developing conscious Zionist commitment in Israel and institutionalizes mere presence in Israel as the be-all and end-all of Zionism. Nor does the Israeli have the option of differentiating in his vote between Knesset and WZO - an option which, significantly, a member of the Histadrut with its separate elections can exercise.

These political practices have made it particularly difficult to utilize the World Zionist Organization as a forum for significant Israel-Diaspora communication not only because it institutionalizes "second class" status for Diaspora Zionists, but also because distinct schools of Israeli thought on Zionism have no way of achieving Zionist political legitimacy, except through political party structures where World Zionist affairs are very secondary considerations. The problem is particularly serious for Labor Zionism which continued Zionistically for a generation to project itself as a mere extension of the immediate political and material needs of the political state of Israel, and gave a poor second priority to the question of Zionist content.

## IDEOLOGICAL TRANSITION IN ISRAEL: IMPLICATIONS FOR LABOR ZIONISM

In the mid-Sixties, Israel began to enter a period of transition insofar as the relationships between Political and Cultural Zionism are concerned. This period of transition (which may well last for a generation) is characterized by fundamental changes in a number of areas - in the relationship with the Arab peoples, in the political leadership and structure of the State's political institutions, in the transition from an autarchically oriented economy to a measure of integration in world trade. Most significantly, for purposes of our discussion, there appears to be an ideological transition - the pendulum is swinging from Political Zionism to Cultural Zionism.

The end aim of Political Zionism - the establishment of a "normal" Jewish nation-state in Eretz Israel has been found wanting not only among select groups of intellectuals, but also among ever-widening circles within the Israeli public. Two wars and the U.N. Resolution on Zionism have created not only an impatience with the social-political status quo in Israel, but also a climate of intellectual search for the significance and purpose of the Jewish State.

It is of importance to clarify why the Labor Zionist movement by-and-large has not succeeded in projecting any kind of vision in terms of Zionist content. It is true to say as we have, that Labor Zionism was co-opted by political Zionism. Nevertheless, such an explanation is not entirely adequate, for after all, intellectual leadership is not necessarily a government function, even though in Israel a situation has evolved where such expectations have been engendered. There appears to be two important additional reasons for the current ideological debacle within Labor Zionism. One reason has to do with the increasingly obvious inability of socialist ideology from without to contribute ideas and ideals relevant to confronting the questions of Jewish "cultural fate" tabled by Berl Katzenelson more than 50 years ago. A second cause is the current nature of Israel's educational system and its implications for cultural Zionism.

### The Bankruptcy of Socialism

It is a commonplace that democratic socialism has been pre-empted by liberal welfare state capitalism. Certainly, even countries such as Holland, Sweden, and Great Britain are characterized by economies where public bodies and private individuals share the functions, production and distribution of goods. This is true of Israel as well. Those states which have sought to achieve equality amongst their citizens by "temporarily" abrogating individual liberties, are hardly closer to the ultimate socialist goal of true fraternity than the western non-socialist democracies.

But Labor Zionism's problem with socialism is much more serious than the limitations evident in democratic state socialism. After all, the socialist influence in cultural Labor Zionism came from the utopian-anarchist path within socialism. The primary community of affinities and the federative principles of Anarchism constituted a conceptual framework for re-creating Jewish community, without which a Jewish State would merely be a political state "like all the Nations". But in fact no state exists today that has realized - even in part - such a socialist ideology. Only in Anarchist Catalonia, during the Spanish Civil War, did such a regime exist for a short period of time before it was militarily overwhelmed by the Spanish communists, the Republican Regime, and finally, Franco's Fascist Falange. Communists, socialists, and fascists, were united against the anarchists' negation of the central authority of the State. And yet, a convincing case can be made that during its eighteen month existence Spanish anarchism created a workable and viable system of government representing the culmination of some fifty years of Anarchist educational work and agitation in Spain.<sup>16</sup>

It would seem that the only partial example of anarchistic socialism today is the Kibbutz socialism. Stanley Meron has pointed out that only Kibbutz socialism has avoided the pitfalls of a state socialist bureaucracy (democratic or totalitarian).<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Sam Dolgin, ed., The Anarchist Collectives in Spain, Free Horizons Press, New York, 1975

<sup>17</sup> Stanley Meron, The Kibbutz:Community or Institution, in M. Langer, ed., A Reform Zionist Perspective: Judaism & Community in the Modern Age, U.A.H.C. Youth Div., N.Y. 1977, p. 329.

The "new class" of these bureaucracies is every bit as inimical to the liberation of the individual and true fraternity as was the classical capitalist bourgeoisie or its contemporary American manifestation in what C. Wright Mills described a generation ago as the industrial-military-political power elite.<sup>18</sup>

The State of Israel and the Histadrut itself during 29 years of Labor Zionist political hegemony have spawned such a bureaucracy as well whose concern has been increasingly the maintenance of its political ascendancy and prerogatives. It is this Labor Zionist "new class" that has been the focus of voter rejection of Israeli labor. The self-righteous pragmatism of the Labor Zionist state and Histadrut bureaucracy has been no more conducive to the development of ideology than similar bureaucracies in other socialist regimes-- democratic or totalitarian.

No extant socialist ideology appears to be readily applicable to the Israeli situation. The initiative will apparently have to come from within.

#### Cultural Labor Zionism - Israel's Educational System

The political decision to "de-ideologize" the public school system has already been noted. Up to 1950 there had already existed a Labor Zionist (Histadrut) school system. Within this system Labor Zionism was presented as philosophy, ideology and personal identity--a way in which to perceive the world. It was supplemented by a system of informal education, the chalutz Youth Movements which were semi-officially integrated into the school system. The youth Movements projected madrichim ("guides") as cultural Labor Zionist role models representing legitimate and valued alternative paths to Zionist self-fulfillment.

With the abrogation of the Labor trend in the school system Labor Zionism became history. Political Zionism became good citizenship, the fulfillment of obligations to the State of Israel, and potentially, just plain nationalism. The Youth Movements lost their prerogatives and the role models they projected were increasingly seen as anachronistic in the post-state era. With two exceptions an

<sup>18</sup>

C. Wright Mills, The Power Elite, Basic Books, New York, 1956

entire generation of young Israelis has grown up essentially without ideology. The most prominent exception has been those who were educated in the religious (Mizrachi) oriented school systems and the Yeshivot of Bnei Akiva. Here both a way of life and an ideology were implicit. The militant expression of this ideology is Gush Emunim. The second (partial) exception is the Kibbutz movement. Certainly the Kibbutz movement educates towards a certain way of life. But its rationale for doing so (the ideology itself) has marked time for more than a generation. In particular, the cultural Labor Zionism of the Kibbutzim has not explicitly come to terms with Judaism even though a great deal of groping in this area is in evidence.<sup>19</sup>

#### THE NEW ZIONIST ORIENTATION

Parallel to the state of transition which characterizes Israel today, a new Jewish and Zionist consciousness is manifesting itself in the Diaspora (an external manifestation of this is the formal affiliation of the Reform and Conservative movements with the World Zionist Organization). These are further indications of what is essentially a renewal of cultural Zionism and a new Zionist orientation the cardinal features of which we must try to make explicit in order to contend with it.

Implicit within the renaissance of Cultural Zionism is a change in the exclusively Israelocentric approach of political Zionism. Cultural Zionism as we have noted always presumed that ensuring the continued creative survival of the Jews wherever they may be was the raison d'etre of the future Jewish State. Such continued creative survival of the Jewish people, be it in the Diaspora or in Israel is becoming the chief concern of Zionism today in Judaism's confrontation with the Modern Age. Such an orientation in no way detracts from the focal importance of Israel, whether immanent or actual, as the National Home and center of the Jewish People. But the concept "Eretz Israel" is relevant only within the context of Am Israel, and hence, we are bound to accept Eli Weisel's words to the Jewish Agency Assembly in June 1974: "What-

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<sup>19</sup> See- Shalom Lilker, Kibbutz Judaism: A New Tradition in the Making, Doctoral thesis, H.U.C.-J.I.R. 28 (New York), 1973 (in publication). See also footnote 23.

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ever our geographical or economical differences may be, it is my absolute conviction that the oneness of our people is of an ontological nature. Whoever chooses one against the other cannot be defined as truly Jewish. Whoever attempts to oppose Israel to the Diaspora or vice versa will inevitably betray both in the end."

If the aim of Zionism is to ensure the continued creative survival of the Jewish People as one people -- both in the Diaspora and in Israel, then the function of the Jewish State is central in this regard for three reasons. Firstly, we have the triple bond (for secularists), or triple covenant (for the religious), which constitutes the core of Judaism - the link between the Jewish People, the Torah (cultural heritage for secularists) and the Land of Israel. Secondly, at least one Jewish center where it is politically possible to develop autonomous social and political institutions up to and including Statehood is necessary to enable the Jewish People to contend creatively as a community with the impact of modernity. Thirdly, only within such a Jewish center can the National Language of the Jewish People, Hebrew, be a living medium for within which Jewish culture can continue to evolve.

Such a definition of Zionism purposely leaves more questions with regard to Israel-Diaspora relations unanswered than it answers, and so it should! After all, the spectrum of views on the problematics of Jewish existence both in Israel and in the Diaspora would itself presumably be the focus of deliberation within Zionism. Therefore, there is no need for full agreement on the practical implications of the centrality of Israel. The Zionist movement would presumably develop a much greater cultural emphasis - programs based on the unity of the Jewish People that give expression to and heighten Jewish-Zionist commitment. Such commitment would be valid whether expressed in Israel or the Diaspora. While one cannot rule out groups within Zionism that will continue to demand Aliya as a sine qua non, the normative approach would eventually be that Aliya is an individual decision and valued act which Zionism has a special responsibility to encourage and support. It would become a primary task of Jewish-Zionist education to afford the individual with the possibility of realistically weighing the options of Jewish commitment and self-realization at an appropriate age.

## Are Israel and the Diaspora Equal?

Would this make the Diaspora "equal" to Israel? The answer would be a qualified "yes". Within a Zionist framework predicated upon this very broad ideology, the 'political rights' of committed Zionists whether in Israel or the Diaspora, insofar as World Jewish Affairs are concerned, would be equal in a formal sense. I say "qualified yes" because the political questions raised by even a qualified "yes" have no precedent in contemporary affairs. The Jewish People is unique and hence, so is the problem. For example, actions (or lack of them) by the political state Israel can be perceived as affecting the possibility of continued creative Jewish survival. But what is to be the modus operandi of Diaspora Zionist input into the affairs of the Jewish State? Similarly, no less significant (even though much less publicized) is the concern of Israeli Zionists (in the sense defined above) with regard to voicing their views effectively with regard to internal Diaspora Jewish Affairs and not just the Diaspora's attitude to Israel.

On the other hand, as distinct from possible formal political equality, Zionism does and always will imply a potential of cultural inequality between the Diaspora and Israel. Arthur Hertzberg has noted that:

"In no version of Zionist thought is it possible to assert the notion of the co-equality of Israel and the Diaspora, not even of a Diaspora on which Israel may be overdependent (my italics ML). To assert the paradigm of "Jerusalem and Babylonia" is to maintain that there is no difference between living in one's own language and existing, even in power and freedom, in a culture such as the American, which may be unique in not being alien to Jews, but which certainly is not totally one's own.<sup>20</sup>

After all, every Jewish child in Israel does attend Hebrew Day School for a minimum of nine years with Bible, Jewish History and Literature as manda-

<sup>20</sup> Arthur Hertzberg, "Reflections on Zionism Today", FORUM, 1976 (2) 25, World Zionist Organization, Jerusalem, p.34.

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tory subjects. The fact that sometimes these subjects are taught in an Israelocentric way that can be problematic for Israel-Diaspora relations hardly detracts from this basic point.

An equally significant point (generally unappreciated in the Diaspora) is the imprinting of the Eretz Israel landscape - historical, biological and geological on the psyche of the young Israelis. This leads to a potential for total Jewish identity totally outside the scope of Diaspora Jewish emotional experience. There has also been in the past, the potential of such identify with the land with the Jewish component deliberately excised. But here we speak of Israeli Zionism and not Canaanism. As Eli Schweid has pointed out, many sensitive young Israelis attempt (unconsciously) to subsume all their Jewish identity in love for the land.<sup>21</sup>

The bond with the land is partly a result of the fact that only in Israel does a real Jewish rural ecology exist. But it is also catalyzed by the deliberate policy of formal and informal education which systematically integrates field trips and excursions through the entire country into the educational experience. The mass phenomenon of "Yidiat Haaretz" (knowledge of the land) gives expression to the infatuation with physical contact with the landscape of Eretz Yisrael, its geography, its flora and fauna, and its archaeological remains, including their links to Jewish history and tradition. If you will - there is the possibility of a cosmic unity to one's Jewish identity in Israel, which has absolutely no counterpart in Diaspora Jewish life.

Hence, ideologically, a Zionist perspective would have to conclude that there is a latent and perhaps at present actual cultural inequality between Israel and the Diaspora, when the two are juxtaposed. But all of this is relative and not absolute. There are clearly many individuals in the Diaspora whose Zionist Jewish identity and commitment will be greater than that of many Israelis. Nor does this formulation rule out or negate the possibility for Jewish creativity in the Diaspora, which can indeed inform and enrich Israel. Actually, most of the ideals that shaped Israel's society inevitably trace

<sup>21</sup>

Eli Schweid, "Ahavat Nof Vezikat Moledat", Shdemot 43, Summer 1971. (Hebrew)

their origins to the Diaspora. But Israel can also have the potential for transmuting Diaspora creativity, in a way that can enhance and invigorate Diaspora Judaism even further. This is the kind of dynamic reciprocity which should underlie Israel-Diaspora relations - a mutually fructifying relationship which should enrich both communities.

### The Israel-Diaspora Dichotomy & The Place of Aliya

In order to realize our commitment to deal with the continued survival of the Jewish people, we must reject the views of those, be they Israeli or American, whose point of departure is the dichotomy between Israel and the Diaspora. There can be no Jewish "agenda" which does not base itself on both Diaspora and Israel if we do indeed affirm the oneness of the Jewish people and its common historical destiny. The Jewish State cannot be seen as an end in itself. We must be deprecate the important role that Israel has played and may still continue to play as a physical haven for Jews in need. But ultimately, as Achad Ha-am foresaw, the political state of Israel is only a means to the end of making contemporary Judaism viable in all free societies.

Such an orientation is a prerequisite to a Zionist commitment today whether for an Israeli Jew or an American Jew. The presence of a Jew in Israel does not automatically make him a Zionist. Nor can we accept the concept of aliya as an isolated act constituting the end-all of Zionist commitment. True, aliya will always be considered a valued act within Jewish tradition, but as an ideal act within the Zionist context it is of significance only insofar as it expresses an abiding commitment to action -- a continuing sense of "cavanah".

### DEFINING A CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL LABOR ZIONISM

It seems to me to be fairly evident that Labor Zionism, building on the tradition of cultural rather than political Labor Zionism must develop a Jewish ideology. A secondary but critical question then becomes what type of institutions both in the State of Israel, and in the Diaspora can constitute the political structure within which such ideology can be realized.

First, let us examine again the possible variables within Jewish Zionist ideology options

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whose origins lie outside the Western tradition and stem from traditional Jewish discourse. These variables are Jewish theology and Halacha (Jewish law). The political implications of differing approaches to these variables are still inchoate stirrings not truly reflected in the institutional and political structure of the World Zionist establishment (or the State of Israel).

#### Theology - The Implications of Messianism

The "theological variable" which has of late drawn the most attention, relates to the interpretation of Messianism in Jewish history. Mizrachi always viewed the Zionist enterprise as the beginning of redemption in which secular ideologies (in spite of themselves) were an instrument of divine will. But today the events of the last 10 years have brought forth a particularly aggressive and militant Messianism which no longer sees fit to work in tandem with the secular appreciation of politics insofar as politics is a secular art of the possible in human affairs. Hence, the theology of Gush Emunim (and in a sense, its neanderthal expression in America, the Jewish Defense League) is to "push God" fanatically in the direction of Messianic realization of Jewish political hegemony over all of Eretz Yisrael conquered by the force of Jewish arms. This is in consonance with Gush Emunim's particular interpretation of traditional texts and Jewish history. Even more significant, in their Messianic theology (Jewish ideology):

"... They have opted for a one  
dimensional integralist mode of  
understanding and regard Western  
cultural influence as a threat  
to be warded off completely!"

(my italics - M.L.)<sup>22</sup>

Gush Emunim is a growing minority within Religious Zionism. There can also be little doubt that this disturbing phenomenon is a vital expression of a new Jewish Zionist ideology which is transforming Mizrachi and wielding some influence among elements of the "secular" public.

<sup>22</sup> Janet O'Dea. "Gush Emunim: Roots and Ambiguities". FORUM. 1976 (2) 25, p.46.

### Halacha

But perhaps of greater ultimate ideological significance is the second variable which lends itself to differing interpretations and this is the approach to Halacha (Jewish law) and the creation of alternative non-Orthodox communal norms. Clearly, here is a parameter of discourse with implications for reciprocal influence for both Diaspora and Israel. The affiliation of both the World Union of Progressive Judaism (Reform) and the World Council of Synagogues (Conservative) with the World Zionist Organization, are milestones in this regard. But while such affiliate status is a symbolic step for these major Diaspora constituencies, they do not as yet represent any real political influence within the World Zionist Organization. Real influence and power is wielded by the constituent political organizations whose roots are in the traditional party structure as explained above. The Reform Movement has now actively undertaken to achieve constituent status within the World Zionist Organization in order to further its particular point of view regarding the continued creative survival of the Jewish People. This is a step for which there is no real precedent in Zionist political annals, during the last 60 years.

Within Israel itself the question of a new Halacha has been gingerly reaised in - of all places - that supposed citadel of secularism, the Kibbutz Movement. After all, basic to Halacha is communal consensus. But how can one develop such a consensus without real community? Can the communal consensus reached within Kibbutzim be seen as a possible basis for a new approach to Halacha and Judaism? Rabbi Shalom Lilker, member of Kibbutz Kfar Hamaccabi, answers in the affirmative.<sup>23</sup>

The logical synthesis of these gropings for other than established Orthodox alternatives within the Jewish State is between Progressive Judaism and

<sup>23</sup> Shalom Lilker, Kibbutz Judaism: A New Tradition in the Making, D.H.L. Dissertation, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, New York, 1974. Excerpt published. "The Religious Mentality", in Halacha, Community & the Kibbutz, College Education Dept., Union of American Hebrew Congregation, N.Y. 1976, p. 17. See also Ben Hanan, "Marking Holidays in 'Godless' Kibbutzim" in HORIZONS, Sept. 1975.

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Labor Zionism. The current attempt to establish a Progressive Jewish Kibbutz is a paradigmatic expression of such a combination.<sup>24</sup> But such a fusion, if successful, would also be a healthy precedent for a reciprocal and dynamic Israel-Diaspora relationship. Reform, and Conservative Judaism (and more recently, "Chavura Judaism") have been Diaspora phenomena. Doubtless, as "ideologies" they will be altered in Israel to something different than what they are in the Diaspora. This was also true for the secular ideologies which were introduced from Diaspora settings. (On the other hand, there is every reason to suppose that alternative forms of Judaism developing in Israel stimulated by the Diaspora will have in their altered form a further vitalizing impact on the Diaspora.

The implication is clear - there must be a de-secularization of Labor Zionism and the conscious decision to build an alternative Judaism from the raw material supplied by the various layers of Jewish tradition. It means a return to some kind of faith - at least in an as yet undefined higher purpose and meaning in being part of Jewish history. Rationalism can be a component, but it can no longer be the only component of such a faith.

At present, the trend to increasing emphasis on Jewish Studies in Oranim, the Kibbutz Movement's Teachers Seminary (now formally associated with the University of Haifa) is creating an infrastructure for the gradual absorption of Jewish ideology within the Kibbutzim but there is not yet an open recognition of the necessity for such an ideology. From the Kibbutz movement, such an orientation would have to spread to the greatly weakened "secular" youth movements such as HaNoar HaOved and HaTzofim.

Are there publics in Israel outside of the Kibbutzim within the framework of the Labor Movement that can initiate a move towards Jewish ideology? For example, is the teachers' union capable of effectively mounting such an initiative within the framework of a secular school system? It is a difficult question.

<sup>24</sup>

Michael Langer, "Reform Judaism and Zionism as Responses to Modernity". Midstream, April. 1977.

## LABOR ZIONISM & THE ISRAELI POLITICAL STRUCTURE

If primary community is the basic pre-requisite for the development of the Jewish ideology, then it is primarily the utopian and anarchist models of socialism that are relevant to Labor Zionism today. I do not suggest the unrealistic precipitate abandonment of the political state. However, one could deliberately nurture primary affinity frameworks based on the potential of maintaining extended family type structure in the community, and based on acceptance of the principle of mutual responsibility of individuals for each other and for the community.

Social status would to a considerable extent be ascriptive (determined by one's belonging to a particular group) rather than based on individual achievement. Such a development would make a concomitant decentralization of political authority a realistic and socially responsible goal.

### The Worker's Settlements (Hityashvut Ovedet)

In Israel today, only the Kibbutzim represent a form of primary community organized nationally on a federative basis.

The Moshav movement (cooperative small-holders settlements) was historically closely associated with Labor Zionist values. Unfortunately, the Moshav Movement has become almost entirely 'de-ideologized'. Furthermore, its ability as a basically agricultural community to absorb further generations appears to be hampered by limitations of land and water. If the Moshavim were to embark on a fuller integration of industry into their rural ecology, the option for a co-operative community could be broadened (as distinct from the collective community structure of the Kibbutz). The educational system of the Moshavim would have to consciously develop the tenets of co-operative community, Moshav style. At present, many Moshavim do not have their own schools and utilize the Government schools, secular or religious, in nearby centers.

Regional rural councils and the Agricultural Union (HaMerkaz HaChaklai) which include the Moshavim as well as the Kibbutzim, still exist in order for the Hityashvut HaOvedet (the Working Settlements) to co-operate regionally on economic and

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The development towns constitute a further possible focus for a concerted attempt to inculcate principles of mutual help and to institutionalize them within local structures. Here it is a question of municipal institutions becoming truly community institutions. The potential building blocks of extended family and geographic affinity exists. But there is an absence of nuclei of people consciously committed to the introduction of a value system which would make life in a development town meaningful and satisfying. Today, development towns are all too often perceived as a place one lives in only until one can afford to get out.

It would really appear to be necessary to create ideologically oriented 'garinim' to development towns (the ideologies may vary in detail - but creation of community would have to be a common denominator). Some hesitant steps are being taken in this direction, but it is my impression that the ideology of the garinim organizing for development towns at present is political-Zionist - i.e. serving the needs of the State. This is not to criticize such an ideology, but rather to point out that if devoid of social and Jewish content, such endeavors will not relate to the problem of cultural Zionism or (even more specifically) cultural Labor Zionism as defined above. Nor can the concept of "Service to the State" serve as an adequate rationale to inhabitants (mostly Eydot Hamizrach) of development towns who tend to view the State as an Ashkenazi institution.

### The Histadrut

Within the urban centers, it is unclear to what extent the Histadrut can be re-habilitated as a vehicle for ideology. Nor is it clear that any common denominator for cultural Labor Zionism will be found for urban workers bereft of community. Too many elements in the Histadrut have become agencies for furthering material interests in the narrowest and crassest sense of particular groups of workers. Can the conceptual basis of community underlying the formation of the Histadrut be resuscitated? It is a question which the Labor Zionist Movement must face honestly. Otherwise, it will continue to be burdened by a millstone around its neck as it is at present.

In particular, those publics within Labor Zionism that are true community-publics (e.g. the Kibbutz Movement) will have to consider the ideological implications of continued affiliation with the Histadrut in its present form. Clearly two options ultimately emerge. One option is leaving the Histadrut and creating an alternative structure federatively organized under the control of community-publics. The other option is the ousting of elements inimical to a cultural Labor Zionism by the concerted action of those still committed to those ideals. At present, the concept of "Labor unity" has become a sham and is paralyzing ideological initiative and absorbing much constructive energy in destructive and irrelevant internecine political strife. This would result in a Histadrut, a federative organization of communities concerned with the social and Jewish ideals and the fabrics of Israeli society. I cannot rule out a partial return to an educational system reflecting such an orientation. Trade Unions with compatible social philosophies could also be integrated.

This option may be realistic politically if institutions such as the Kupat Holim are nationalized - such a development may well be a real blessing in disguise for the Histadrut, forcing it to jettison much of its bureaucracy and giving it the opportunity to re-assess and reform.

Whether a new Histadrut is created or whether the existing institution is reformed, the "new class" of Histadrut bureaucrats must be eliminated by instituting the simple rule of a time limit that one can serve in administrative and executive positions after which a return to one's primary community becomes mandatory. Minor administrative functions do not require tenure of more than two or three years and the most major posts should be limited to a tenure of six years (one might adapt the idea of Shmitta).

#### The Electoral System

The problem of creating urban community in the modern city is not peculiar to Israel. Nevertheless, the creation of wards within cities and the introduction of direct representation in municipal elections will probably be a positive step. Changing the basis of the elections to the Knesset to one of direct representation will be an improvement over the present

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system, even though it creates the problem of political representation of small scattered primary affinity groups. But the present uncritical political support that such affinity groups (e.g. the majority of the Kibbutz movement) are giving to the centralized Labor Zionist bureaucracy is counter-productive to the long-term ideological interests of cultural Labor Zionism based on decentralization and primary community.

Ultimately, a change in the electoral system is a necessity for cultural Labor Zionism for quite another reason - in order to make the development of alternative Jewish ideological content a political reality, the political monopoly of Orthodox Rabbinic Judaism within the State of Israel as sole interpreter of Halacha must gradually be attenuated.

#### LABOR ZIONISM AND RELIGION

The Labor Zionist Movement cannot ignore its relationship to Judaism any longer - Berl Katzenelson's ideological promissory note is long overdue. Like the compounding of interest on overdue notes, so has the continued abdication of Labor Zionism compounded the ideological problem. Fertile soil has been created for a phenomenon such as Gush Emunim, whose political messianism appears to represent the sole alternative for a meaningful Jewish ideology. The religious labor sector has been overwhelmed by this militant political messianism that has emerged as a result of the events of the last ten years. Political Labor Zionism's ideologically colorless pragmatism has attempted to counter this messianism by appeals to reality, responsibility, and moderation, and even socialism (whatever that may mean in this context). But what has been needed and what has not been forthcoming is the formulation of Jewish counter-ideology. There have been dissident voices within Orthodox Zionism. Uriel Tal has recently reviewed them exhaustively.<sup>25</sup> But these dissident voices (e.g. Moshe Unna, a prominent leader in the Religious Kibbutz movement; Rabbi Menachem HaCohen, prominent in the Religious Affairs Dept. of the Histadrut) do not appear to be able to mobilize the traditional public in the way that Gush Emunim has

<sup>25</sup>

Uriel Tal, "The Land and the State of Israel in Israeli Religious Life", The Rabbinical Assembly Proceedings, Vol. 38, 1976.

done. Hence, we return inevitably to the question of transforming Jewish ideology from latent to manifest within certain circles of the "secular" public. These are the circles which even today identify at one level or another more or less with the ethos of Cultural Labor Zionism.

But cultural Labor Zionism finds itself in a quandary. What Jewish tradition can it draw upon authentically after three generations of estrangement? It is true that small circles of thinkers in the Kibbutz movement are involved in this problem, but it is questionable whether the circles for the study of Judaism in the Kibbutzim and in Kibbutz institutions such as Oranim, can of themselves, generate enough ideological momentum within Labor Zionism.

It is almost inevitable that considerable Jewish input will have to come directly and/or indirectly from the Diaspora, where Jewish alternatives to Orthodoxy - and indeed a more flexible neo-Orthodoxy - have developed over a period of 100 years. The messianic argument that only "from Zion shall go forth Torah" is specious if one does indeed believe in the unity of the Jewish people, and if one examines Jewish history. Indeed, modern orthodoxy and ultra-Orthodoxy are surely products of the Diaspora. The return from the captivity in 537 B.C.E. in the then "orthodox tradition" of the Davidic succession proved inadequate to realize the Restoration. A further input from the Babylonian Diaspora under the leadership of Ezra and Nechemia proved necessary to establish the religio-cultural foundations which eventually evolved into Rabbinic Judaism.

This historical parallel in no way detracts from the basic Zionist thesis that Jewish creativity did and can and will express itself ideally and optimally in Eretz Israel. On the other hand, such a Zionist position does not deny the potential for flourishing and creative Jewish life in the Diaspora. Unfortunately the breakdown of organic Jewish community and the secularization of Jewish life have made this much more problematic than in the days of the Babylonian and/or Spanish Diasporas.

#### Labor Zionism and Progressive Judaism

As has already been noted, it would seem, theologically and halachically, that Progressive (Reform)

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Judaism may provide at least in part, a Jewish ideology compatible with cultural Labor Zionism. Conservative Judaism is theologically and halachically a liberal orthodoxy. It is to be hoped that if Conservative Judaism can become influential, it will strengthen the liberal and moderate elements among those who believe in the one-time Divine Revelation of the Torah. Reconstructionism hardly has a specific applicability in Israel. It is in many ways indistinguishable from a Reform Judaism affirming peoplehood and the developmental principle in Judaism. While Reconstructionist thinkers - and chief among them the venerable Mordecai Kaplan - will continue to influence both Reform and Conservative Judaism, it seems that by and large it constitutes an intellectual approach rather than a "Torat Chaim". As I have noted elsewhere<sup>26</sup>, the synthesis between Labor Zionism and Reform Judaism is already finding practical expression in the co-operation between the Kibbutz movement and the Reform movement in establishing the first Reform Kibbutz, Yahel.

The American Reform Movement's decision to create the Association of Reform Zionists of America as a constituent member of the American Zionist Federation and the World Zionist Organization presages a future basis for new Labor Zionist political alignments within the World Zionist framework. The Labor Zionist desire for political moderation will find a natural ally in the moderate Cultural Zionism of Reform Judaism. In America, many leading Reform Rabbis (Richard G. Hirsch, now Director of the World Union for Progressive Judaism; Rabbi David Polish, former C.C.A.R. president and author of Renew Our Days: The Zionist Issue in Reform Judaism, have in fact been associated with Labor Zionism for many years. Within the World Zionist framework, such a congruence may balance the current alignment between political messianism (Jewish ideology) and militant nationalism (Western ideology) that has emerged in the wake of the ideological vacuum left by an overly political Labor Zionism.

#### CULTURAL LABOR ZIONISM AND THE DIASPORA

The object of political Zionism (and, during the past generation, of political Labor Zionism) in

<sup>26</sup>

Michael Langer, "Reform Judaism and Zionism as Responses to Modernity" Midstream, April 1977

its relationship with the Diaspora has been primarily concerned with extracting maximal financial and political support for the State of Israel. Indeed, even the occasionally strident calls for mass Aliya have had second priority.

Certainly it cannot be said that Labor Zionism has had a point of view with regard to the desirable structure of the American Jewish Community. On a practical level, the political Labor Zionist establishment developed a comfortable working relationship with the American Jewish establishment without evaluating the effect of such uncritical support on the American Jewish Community.

The questions of a coherent policy vis-a-vis the Diaspora - particularly the United States - can no longer be avoided. Cultural Labor Zionism desperately needs reinforcement from the Diaspora in the form of an ideologically committed cultural Zionist Aliya. Parallel to this, cultural Zionism in the Diaspora must be nurtured in order to ensure the Jewish dynamic necessary to maintain the authentic Jewish creativity, without which a cultural Zionist Aliya cannot be generated.

It is here that Cultural Labor Zionist must offer the insight that just as "statism" in Israel has had deleterious effects Jewishly, so has the de-emphasis of frameworks of primary Jewish identity been a negative development for American Jewish Community. The rise of the Federations and the association of almost all pro-Israel activity through them or their related agencies in the name of "Klal Israel" has greatly weakened the central institution of Jewish affiliation and continuity - the synagogal congregation.

#### The Synagogue & Cultural Zionism

It is clear that with the exception of a few organized secular islands in major metropolitan centers, only the synagogue has the potential for constituting primary community within American Judaism. Only the synagogue organizations have the infrastructure - physical and ideological - for the development of a federative network of community which the nuclear family can be associated with, and which has relevance to at least life cycle events. Furthermore, this network makes possible a continuity of association under conditions of unparalleled geographic mobility.

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It is the synagogue federations that are the principal basis for Cultural Zionism. The classical Zionist organizations (Hadassah, Z.O.A, and even the L.Z.A) are by definition and by origin politically Zionist and philanthropic in activity emphasis. They are more intensive and on average more committed than a nominally non-Zionist, but nevertheless pro-Israel organization, like B'nai Brith. But a common ideological denominator (regarding Peoplehood, Halacha, Theology) necessary for an integral cultural Zionist approach does not exist among faithful and historic supporters of Political Zionism any more than it does in B'nai Brith.

The Federations, serving as they do as the "umbrella" for the Jews in a given locality (who call themselves a Jewish community but really are not in any essential meaning of the word) have co-opted much of the function of the historic Zionist groupings and by removing the focus of Israel activity from the synagogues the possibility of "integrating Zion" within the focus of primary Jewish identity and educational activity has been compromised.

#### Cultural Labor Zionism & Jewish Youth

It is primarily through educational work with adolescents when personal identity is being crystallized that cultural Labor Zionism can have a modest influence on American Jewry. (We must keep in mind that adolescence in America as a social psychological phenomenon lasts from puberty and until one's graduation from college in the early and even mid-twenties).

To do so, there must be a deliberate policy of working through organizations and movements which represent the potential for primary identity over a period of time - not the amorphous Federation or service-oriented Community Center. This means working through the existing Zionist Youth Movements (whose numbers at the teen-age and college level are limited to a few thousand) and the synagogue youth organizations, not all of whom are as yet fully prepared to integrate cultural Zionism theoretically and practically. There must also be a deliberate policy of priority in allocating Labor Zionist cultural resources among the thousands of Jewish youth who come to Israel in the summer. The main resource here is, of course, the Kibbutz movement itself and here absolute priority must be given to "movement" as distinct from "Federation" and "community center", 43

or other undefined groupings. (In my opinion, the educational demands that have to be made of the Kibbutzim fully justify some financial compensation.) To the extent that Kibbutzim lend themselves to working with non-movement groups, there must be an understanding that some Zionist youth movement will be allowed to do follow-up work with the youth upon their return to America.

#### KIBBUTZ INITIATIVE NECESSARY

The type of initiative necessary for the development of a Cultural Labor Zionist policy, both in Israel and in the Diaspora must come at present mainly from the Kibbutz movement. In Israel it is not enough to serve the needs of the State--in executing settlement policy, in supplementing the social service of Development towns, in creating a dynamic export-oriented Kibbutz industry. The commitment to strengthen the State and its society must be accompanied by a process of ideological re-definition which may ultimately redefine the Kibbutz movements' traditional political alignments.

In the Diaspora, the traditional pattern of Zionist youth movement work is completely inadequate for the development of working relationships with significant American Jewish publics. There is no doubt that the Kibbutz movement as a whole has yet to develop the deliberative and executive patterns necessary for evolving relationships within the American Jewish community which take into account how a maximum impact can be achieved with the very limited resources that can be spared from an already over-committed movement. It believe that significant elements in the American Jewish community would welcome such an initiative if undertaken within the framework of a cultural Zionist orientation. The long term benefits of such a policy would hopefully be the creation of a significant chalutzic movement in America.

At present, an ideological vacuum exists in the Jewish world. Cultural Labor Zionism (and in particular the only organized element within it--the Kibbutzim) are called upon to play a significant role in projecting an overall orientation ("Weltanschauung") which can serve the world community of Jewish communities (the Jewish people) as a guiding conceptual framework for organizational, educational and political activity both in the Diaspora and in Israel during the difficult years ahead.